

self divorced from her husband, and Josephus, when he speaks of Salome's sending a bill of divorce to Costabarus, adds that this was not in accordance with Jewish law; so that a woman separated by her own act from her husband could not marry another, but only if she were put away by her first husband.

What meaning then are we to give to Mark 10:12? Was the wife's power to put away a husband creeping in among the Jews, who lived under Greek or Roman law? or did our Lord give a rule to his apostles, as future teachers of the heathen world?

Divorce on the husband's part was at first unrestricted. But in Deut. 24:1 two restrictions were laid upon it: the one of them, that a bill of divorce should be given to the wife, which would show that she had committed no crime, and might marry again; and the other, that the first husband could never take back the wife so put away, in case the second husband should repudiate her.

Our Lord and the apostle Paul go far beyond these restrictions on divorce. Christ (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2, 12,) without giving a code of rules, sets aside the practice allowed in Deut. 24:1 to the husband, and forbids the putting away of a wife, and marrying another, except for the cause of her fornication. To this he adds that the woman thus divorced commits adultery by her marrying another man, and that this new husband is involved in the same guilt: in other words, adultery is the only cause for which a man can put away his wife, and for which as Mark adds a woman can put away her husband, without violating this commandment.

Our Lord teaches that the union commenced by marriage was so close that they became one flesh and could not cease to be such by one of the parties tearing away his body, except by a violent disruption from the other.

This was the original idea in the institution, and it was a departure from the original law of our nature when Moses, on the account of the Jew's inveterate attachment to an evil usage, "suffered them to put away their wives." Adultery only can separate this close union; and there can be no marriage of either consort to any one else, except on this account.

In no other place does our Lord act as a legislator and an amender of the law of Moses; and even here he gives no body of rules, but confirms himself to a single command. The command itself is confined to that case which was touched in Deuteronomy. One may still ask whether the guilty party, divorced on account of adultery, may marry again; the answer must be affirmative, in so far as the adulterer or adulteress ceases to be one flesh with his or her partner.

But, as such adultery would be a capital crime by Jewish law, there was less need of saying anything further about it, and it is a wonder it can be tolerated in any Christian country.

The apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:10-16, gives directions to the Corinthian church, which may be called a supplement to our Lord's commands as contained in the Gospels. These directions consist of two parts, one of which is intended to meet a case which would have occurred when both husband and wife were professed Christian believers. A wife is commanded not to separate herself from her husband; to which is added, that, if she be already in a state of separation from him, she is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to him.

The husband also is not to put away his wife. Dr. Woolsey remarks "that the Greek word denoting *be reconciled* implies a previous dissension which led the wife to withdraw from her husband's society." But did the apostle have in mind a disagreement arising out of the husband's adultery? Again he says: "We are led to believe that the Greek terms used denote simple separation unattended with divorce, as if it were a transaction not formally taking place before a civil court." She had left her husband, and was living apart. As long as she lives apart, let her contract no new marriage, or return to her husband when their strife shall have ceased. In accordance with this interpretation we understand the husband's putting away the wife not to include the crime of adultery on her part; otherwise the apostle would come into collision with our Lord's clear permission of divorce on account of adultery.

The apostle's other precept relates first to cases where either husband or wife was still an unbeliever, but might wish to live with his or her Christian partner.

In this case the Christian was not to leave the unbeliever. Or again: the unbeliever might wish to separate himself or herself from the Christian. The apostle's direction here is, if the unbeliever depart, let him depart.

In such cases the Christian wife or husband is under no such obligation, or in such a state of bondage, as to feel constrained to continue the marriage connection.

The believer is to be passive, not active, in the separation, and is not to feel that the possibility of saving a heathen wife or husband at any expense of a strife is a duty.

From Christ's precepts it follows that a marriage is dissolved by adultery, so that the innocent party may marry again, and that other separations are not included in this permission.

On these foundations the practice of

divorce has been placed in Christendom, after long struggles of Roman law for a looser practice.

Protestant countries in modern times have greatly multiplied the causes for which divorce may be obtained, by adding to the original causes such others as cruelty, imprisonment for crime, drunkenness, contagious or incurable disease, and insanity. In some countries incompatibility of temper, in some, mutual agreement with no allegation of crime, are allowed to be cause for absolute divorce. In one of the United States the judges are left free to grant divorce when they think that the happiness of the marriage relation requires it. Nowhere is the problem of divorce so poorly solved, or so charged with danger for the future, as in the United States. It is certainly an alarming fact that the ratio of divorce to marriage is as one to ten, or even greater in some states.

If the laws grant dissolutions of marriage on ground which the Christian people cannot find to be justified in the Scriptures, it must injure the church, and society suffers still more.

Loose laws aggravate the evils they are made to relieve. The ideal of marriage is lowered. It is no longer in close union denoted by "twain becoming one flesh," or by God's joining man and wife together, so that man may not put them asunder. The real closeness of the union cannot be preserved unless the parties feel what Christ says of it.

When the laws respecting divorce and the opinions concerning divorce in the New Testament are in conflict, there is no question, in most cases, what is the duty of Christians. The law can be permissive only; that is, it may leave to individuals to choose whether they will make use of the license it affords them or not. It does not oblige them to bring suit for divorce, even in the case when a husband or wife has been unfaithful in their marriage relations. Again: law could not, without being tyrannical, require a church, which has disciplined one of its members on account of divorce and re-marriage contrary, to the rule of Scripture, to restore him to his standing. But, altho this be true, a church may be brought into great perplexity when state law opens a gate which the law of the New Testament shuts. For the thoughtless are tempted by the law to do that which is held to be unlawful by the church; while the church has no option in regard to exercising its discipline upon offenders within its folds. The state's permission is no more of a bar to discipline in such case than if the church member had opened an authorized gambling house or saloon. But if the law had agreed in its provisions with the church, there would have been no such trouble,